

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 DRC-01 /121 W

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R 301950Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4609

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 0389

E.O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PINT, ES

SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR'S ELECTIONS 1974: OFF TO A SLOW START

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. CAMPAIGNS FOR THE MARCH 10 LEGISLATIVE/MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HAVE FINALLY GOTTEN UNDERWAY IN A RATHER LACKLUSTER FASION. THE SAME PARTIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE 1972 ELECTIONS ARE AGAIN IN THE RUNNING; THE GOVERNMENT'S PCN; THE CENTER-LEFT PDC, THE SMALL MNR AND THE COMMUNIST INFLUENCED U, RUNNING ONCE MORE AS THE UNO COALITION; AND TO THE RIGHT, THE PPS AND FUDI.

2. THE PCN, WHICH IS BY FAR THE BEST ORGANIZED AND PREPARED OF THE CONTESTANTS, MAINTAINS ITS TRADITIONAL POSTURE: MILDLY REFORMIST, VOICING OPPOSITION TO THE "RETROGRADE" RIGHT AND THE "COMMUNIST-INFLUENCED" LEFT. THIS YEAR IT IS IPDMISTRESSING ITS IMAGE AS THE PARTY OF CONSTRUCTIVE NATIONALISM AND THE PARTY OF ACTION. THE UNO COALITION, HAVING OVERCOME INTERNAL PROBLEMS, IS ATTEMPTING TO STEAL WHAT LITTLE THERE IS OF THE NATIONALIST

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THUNDER FROM THE PCN, CRITICIZES THE GOVERNMENT FOR LACK OF

MAJOR REFORMS AND RECALLS HE CONTESTED ELECTIONS OF 1972. THE TWO RIGHTIST PARTIES HAVE YET TO REALLY GET THEIR CAMPAIGNS UNDERWAY AND MAY RUN CANDIDATES ONLY IN SELECTED DEPARTMENTS. SPECULATION ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY RACE CENTERS ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WILL PERMIT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TO WIN MORE THAN ONE THIRD OF THE SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY, THUS GIVING THEM A VETO OVER CERTAIN KINDS OF CRITICAL FISCAL LEGISLATION. (AT THIS TIME, FEW OBSERVERS FEEL THAT THE PCN IS IN DANGER OF LOSING A SIMPLE MAJORITY IN THE LEGISLATIVE.) IF THE ELECTORAL RESULTS SHOW THE OFFICIAL PARTY ONLY A SEAT OR TWO AWAY FROM TWO-THIRDS DOMINANCE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY INDEED BE TEMPTED TO TINKER WITH THE OUTCOME AS IT PROBABLY WOULD TO RETAIN A SIMPLE MAJORITY PLUS A SAFETY MARGIN. THUS FAR, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGN MF GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT OF THE OPPOSITION OR CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT IT INTENDS TO RESORT TO FRAUD.

3. IN GENERAL, WITH A DEARTH OF APPEALING ISSUES (CANDIDATES ARE NOT IMPORTANT), THE CAMPAIGN HAS PRODUCED LITTLE POPULAR INTEREST OR ENTHUSIASM. VOTER APATHY, THE UNO'S MAIN CONCERN, WOULD TEND TO WORK IN FAVOR OF THE PCN WHICH AS THE RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATION TO GET OUT THE VOTE. THE UNO IS EVIDENTLY COUNTING ON THE RETURN OF FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DUARTE IN LATE FEBRUARY TO SPARK THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE RANK AND FILE. US INTERESTS IN EL SALVADOR WOULD BEST BE SERVED BY A PEACEFUL AND HONEST CONTEST. US POLICIES ARE NOT AT ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER, THE PCN'S NATIONALIST SLOGAN HAS PRODUCED SOME LOW GRADE DEBATE ABOUT US INVESTMENT AND INFLUENCE IN THE COUNTRY AND, WHILE NOT A REALLY SIGNIFICANT ISSUE, THIS MATTER COULD BECOME SOMEWHAT MORE CONTROVERSIAL IF THE OPPOSITION CHOOSES TO EXPLOIT IT MORE EFFECTIVELY IN THE FUTURE.

4. FOREGOING SUMMARIZES EMBASSY'S A-14 OF JANUARY 30.
MOSKOWITZ

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